

**Carleton University  
Fall 2017  
Department of English**

**ENGL 3902  
*Writing for Stage and Screen***

**Location: University Centre 280  
Fridays 8:35-11:25**

*Please confirm location and time on Carleton Central*

**Instructor: Sarah Waisvisz  
Email: sarah.waisvisz@carleton.ca  
Office: Dunton Tower 1914  
Office Hours: Fridays 3-5**

**Please note:**

This is a course on the practical work of playwriting, but it demands that the students also read plays and attend plays. Together we will develop a shared vocabulary for discussing theatre and dramatic writing, and students will be encouraged to participate in theatrical events and opportunities happening locally in Ottawa. The bulk of our in-class time together will feature discussions and writing workshops, and students will also be expected to read and write outside of class time. Invited guests from the theatre community will join us to provide their expertise. By the end of the term, students will have developed a portfolio of in-progress dramatic writing; will have learned about the professional theatre industry in Canada; will be cognizant of local writing opportunities; will have developed skills as editors and dramaturges of their own work and of their classmates' work; will better understand their own writing process; and will have begun work on a new script of their own.

**Important: This semester's course will focus on Playwriting, or Writing for the Stage.**

A course on Writing for the Screen will likely be offered in Fall 2018.

**Please come to the first class with working knowledge**

-of at least 1 Classical Tragedy (ie. *Oedipus Rex*) and 1 Classical Comedy (ie. *Lysistrata*)  
-of at least 1 Shakespearean Tragedy (ie. *Hamlet*) & 1 Shakespearean Comedy (ie. *Twelfth Night*)  
-of major eras in literature and drama (ie. classical / Elizabethan / Restoration / Naturalism / Modernism / PostModernism / Postcolonialism)

**The weekly schedule is divided into:**

- ☑ lectures by the instructor on a weekly topic and participatory discussion with students
  - ☑ guest lectures (by local writers, publishers, organizers of literary festivals, as well as other specialists)
  - ☑ in-class writing in response to targeted writing prompts and in response to literary examples
  - ☑ workshopping prompts (sharing and critiquing) in small groups in class
- \*class will conclude with in-classroom writing time to kickstart the work you will finish at home

**Learning outcomes:**

1. Students will emerge from this course with a portfolio of creative work related to the genre of playwriting, as well as a draft or draft excerpt of a playscript.
2. Students will also gain a critical understanding of how the playwriting and theatre industry functions in Canada and be able to situate playwrights, styles, and major themes within that landscape.
3. Students will learn to read dramatic texts as writers and to speak about these same texts as writers (rather than as readers or scholars)
4. Students will learn how to critique/discuss a piece of dramatic writing, employing key terms such as “plot,” “voice,” “style,” and “character.”
5. Students will learn how to be “dramaturges” and edit their own work and that of others.
6. Students will have the opportunity to practice reading their own creative work in front of others.
7. Students will learn from professional artists working in the field of theatre.

**Required texts:**

Each week we will read dramatic writing and/or an essay on the weekly topic(s). These readings will be on ARES (a digital repository of class readings made available through MacOdrum library), or on Reserve at the Library, or available at OCTOPUS BOOKS. Students are also welcome to beg, borrow, steal, or buy copies of the plays we are reading. Some are available in anthologies. Please look at the attached bibliography for publication information.

**Evaluation:**

**1. Reading quizzes:** 15%

**2. Review assignment:** National Arts Centre/ Fresh Meat Festival/ Great Canadian Theatre Company: 10%

**3. Artist Pages** (in class writing exercises, texts, drafts that support your project): 35%

**4. Editorial feedback** on the work of one of your peers: 15%

**5. Final Project:** 25% (2 mandatory consultations with Instructor for 5%; 20% for writing itself)

**ATTENDANCE** will be taken at the beginning of each class. A student who misses more than four classes without a medical note or note of accommodation will automatically lose 10% of their final grade.

**Assignment descriptions:**

**1. Reading Quizzes:** it is important that we build a shared vocabulary for how to discuss plays and playwriting. Consequently I have assigned readings for each week that will ground our work and give us models and examples. I hope the plays inspire you; they inspire me. I will quiz you.

**2. Professional theatre review assignment:** Each of you will attend a play or theatrical event this fall here in Ottawa and write a review of it (two double-spaced pages, approximately five hundred words). Possible options include professional shows at the National Arts Centre, Great Canadian Theatre Company, or a review of the theatrical event Fresh Meat Festival. Other options are also possible; in all cases, please confirm with the instructor BEFORE you attend. In many cases student tickets and group rates are available. Let me know what you want to see, and I will try to help you get a good rate!

You may begin your review by introducing the time, date, location, name of the reader(s). You can then comment on such things as your general impressions about the content of the reading, the reading style, the venue, and/ or the experience of listening to authors speak about their writing. As with all assignments in this course, this review will be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, and double spaced. Your name and the name of your TA will appear on each page.

For BONUS points: opportunity to work up your review for ONLINE PUBLICATION with *alt.theatre journal*. We will discuss this option in class.

**3. Artist Pages** (in class writing exercises, texts, drafts that support your project): 35%

**4. Editorial feedback** on the work of one of your peers: 15%

### **5. Final Project**

Our opportunities for regular writing and editing during each class will give you fodder and material for your final project, due the last day of class. The final project will consist of an excerpt from a new play written by you. It does not have to be a complete play, but it does have to be at least 5-10 pages long and be more finely crafted than a first draft.

Before turning in your final project, you MUST have 2 consultation sessions with me about your project. The consultation sessions together count for 5% but if we do not meet and I do not give my OK I cannot accept the completion of your assignment. These consultations will ensure you are on the right track and will also be the occasion to discuss your writing process, as well as any struggles and successes you may be facing.

**Please note:** students are invited to visit me during Office Hours on Friday afternoons from 3-5.

## Weekly Schedule

[knowledge of the plays in squarebrackets would be helpful]

Date and Topic	Readings	Guest	Work Due
<p><b>Week 1 Friday September 8</b>            Course outline; CU Learn and ARES            Assign workshop groups            Workshop mechanics/ Reading as a Writer</p>	<p>- Louis Menand, "<a href="#">Show Don't Tell: Should Creative Writing be Taught?</a>"            - Francine Prose, "<a href="#">Close Reading</a>"            - Ann Bogart, 2 excerpts from <i>A Director Prepares</i> – available on CU Learn</p>		<p>Self Portrait : we will work on this in class</p>
<p><b>Week 2 Friday September 15</b>            Can creative writing be taught? Should it be?            The difference between writing for the page and writing for the stage: considering actors, physicality, voice, design, sound, audience, setting, etc.</p>	<p>VOICE and MOVEMENT workshop</p>	<p>Guest:            Doreen Taylor-Claxton, performer</p>	<p>BRING COMFY CLOTHES AND WATER. Today's class will focus on voice and movement.</p>
<p><b>Week 3 Friday September 22</b>            Write what you know? Topics in appropriation, imagination, audience            The Solo Show: Writing Process and Solo Touring</p>	<p><i>Monstrous</i> by Sarah Waisvisz            (handouts will be provided)</p>		
<p><b>Week 4 Friday September 29</b>            Aristotelian Elements of Drama            Plot according to Shakespeare and Ibsen            Quick overview of Dramatic Eras and Genres</p>	<p>[<i>Oedipus Rex</i> by Sophocles / <i>Hamlet</i> by Shakespeare / <i>A Doll's House</i> by Henrik Ibsen]   <i>Antigone</i> by Sophocles (Seamus Heaney translation if possible)</p>		
<p><b>Week 5 Friday October 6</b>            Writing character            Writing plot</p>	<p><i>Perfect Pie</i> by Judith Thompson</p>		<p>Watch <i>Sir John A: A Gentrified Ojibway Rebellion</i>            *Oct. 11 chance to listen to the playwright at NAC</p>
<p><b>Week 6 Friday October 13</b>            Revising / rewriting / editing            The art of Dramaturgy            Solo Shows</p>	<p><b>*bring in your own writing as is!</b>  <i>Afrika, Solo</i> by Djanet Sears</p>	<p>Guest:            Emily Pearlman</p>	<p>Editing / Dramaturgy Workshop</p>
<p><b>Week 7 Friday October 20</b>            Adaptation</p>	<p>* [<i>Othello</i> + <i>Romeo &amp; Juliet</i> by Shakespeare]   <i>Good Night Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet</i> by Ann-Marie MacDonald</p>		

<b>Week 8 Friday November 3</b> Style, genre, scale	*[ <i>Caucasian Chalk Circle/ Mother Courage</i> by Bertolt Brecht]  <i>Angels in America: The Millennium Approaches</i> by Tony Kushner		
<b>Week 9 Friday November 10</b> Historical Drama / Witnessing	<i>Corpus</i> by Darrah Teitel	Guest: Darrah Teitel, Playwright	
<b>Week 10 Friday November 17</b> Theatre and Social Justice / Human Rights	<i>The Monument</i> by Colleen Wagner		
<b>Week 11 Friday November 24</b> Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, City of Ottawa Arts Funding Program; NAC/GCTC Development Programs for Writers The Future of Canadian Theatre	<i>Where the Blood Mixes</i> by Kevin Loring		
<b>Week 12 Friday Dec. 1</b> <b>Literary Salon:</b> in-class reading of our own work	<b>* bring your new writing!</b> A chance for you to present your work to your peers		<b>Final Projects DUE</b>

### Bibliography of Readings forthcoming

### **Statement on Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is cheating.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence and it cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

### **Final Grades:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). **Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.** After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to

ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website ([www.carleton.ca/pmc](http://www.carleton.ca/pmc)) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).